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The Invocation of Saints and/or Spirits by the Sufis and the Shamans: About the *Munâjât* Literary Genre in Central Asia

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This paper will examine the question of the *munâjât* (Arabic *najâ*, to pray), both as a literary genre and a particular kind of prayer or address to the deities which is distinguished from common *salât* and *du'a*, and which calls for the intercession of saints and/or protecting spirits. In Central Asia[1], the *munâjât* genre exists both in Sufi and shamanistic literature but it has a different purpose when performed by a Sufi or a shaman. First, the *munâjât* of the Sufis might be depicted as an intimate conversation with God and other saintly persons but it is turned sometimes into a list of Sufî saints from whom help on the spiritual path is required. Uttered by non-Sufis, the *munâjât* is a petitionary prayer addressed to saints for a wide variety of purposes. Second, the invocation of helper spirits by a shaman was in several cases called *munâjât* by the shaman himself while imitating the Muslims and the Sufis; this is an indication that in the shaman's eyes both prayers are identical. However, the aim of the shaman when uttering a *munâjât* is to heal a sick person with the aid of his helper spirits. On the contrary the goal of the Sufi is the search for spiritual guidance. Here, shamanism and Islam, or rather shamanism and Sufism, intermingle as has been found in several other cases investigated by scholars[2]. My aim in this article is two-fold: first, to discuss the Sufi and shamanistic *munâjât* genre and to show that Sufi *munâjât* might be classified under at least two categories; second, considering that a petitionary prayer (*munâjât*) in Central Asia is usually addressed to the holy figures, saints and non-human creatures considered worthy to be venerated by the locals, I will try to answer the following questions: "Who are the major holy figures addressed by both Sufis, non-Sufis and shamans?" and "What are the differences between Sufis' and shamans' *munâjât*?" Such an analysis will provide us with a better knowledge of the Central Asian pantheon and how it lives on in the popular memory of the locals.

In general, the term *munâjât* that is widespread among the Sufis of the Turko-Persian area refers to a prayer in verse and a religious invocation to be chanted[3]. *Munâjât* was translated as "cry from the heart" (cris du cœur) by Serge de Laugier de Beaurecueil who translated the *munâjât*

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1) In this article, Central Asia refers primarily to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and southern Kazakhstan

2) See O.A. Suhareva, "O nekotoryh èlementah sufizma, geneticheski svjazannyh s shamanstvom," in *Materiali vtorogo soveshchanija arheolog i ètnografov Srednei Azii* (Moskva - Leningrad: 1959), pp. 128-135; Vladimir N. Basilov, *Shamanstvo u narodov Srednej Azii i Kasakhstana* (Moscou: Nauka, 1992), pp. 293-303; Patrick Garrone, *Chamanisme et Islam en Asie centrale. La baksylyk hier et aujourd'hui* (Paris: Jean Maisonneuve, 2000), pp. 242-254; Thierry Zarcone, "Interpénétration du soufisme et du chamanisme dans l'aire turque: 'chamanisme soufisé' et 'soufisme chamanisé," in D. Aigle; B. Brac de la Perrière; and J.-P. Chaumeil, eds., *La Politique des esprits. Chamanismes et Religions universalistes* (Nanterre [Paris]: Société d'ethnologie, 2000), pp. 383-396.

3) See for example the anthology of more than 90 classic and modern Ottoman and Turkish *munâjat* collected by Cemâl Kurnaz, *Münâcât Antolojisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1992). About the *munâjât* in Muslim devotion, see Constance E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions. A Stydy of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), pp. 11-12.

written by the well-known Iranian Sufi Khwâja ʻAbd Allâh Ansârî (d. 1089) at Herat (Khurasan)[4]. There are other translations for this term such as "intimate conversation with God" (Ernst) or "extempore prayer" (van den Berg)[5]. Van den Berg, who has investigated the *munâjât* in the Pamir area (in contemporary Tajikistan), opposes the *munâjât* to the *salât* or ritual prayer and points out that the *munâjât* is rather associated to the *du'â* (personal prayer)[6], a fact which is confirmed by religious literature (see below). However, these two genres are far from similar and Van den Berg makes a provocative remark: she states that "The repetitional pattern in long *munâjât* is reminiscent of a *dhikr*, while the *du'â* in Badakhshan is a formula, usually expressed after or at the conclusion of a long poem.[7]" Although all the definitions of the *munâjât* presented above are acceptable I find them limited. I would like here, though tentatively, to go further in the study of this genre in Central Asia, especially in the Sufi milieu, and to classify the *munâjât* under two headings. 1) the *munâjât* as a simple prayer, usually personal, that is different to the *salât* and closer to *du'â*, as has been well explained by Van den Berg; 2) the *munâjât* as a personal and/or collective prayer dedicated to a list of saints either in disorder or in a very precise order which, in some cases, refers to the lineage of a *tarîqa*; in this last case the *munâjât* is equated to the reading of a text of *silsila* (genealogical chain).

The contents of the *munâjât* are varied and although this genre was very popular among Sufis it was not restricted to them. There are many non-Sufi uses of this genre, for numerous purposes, religious or even profane. As it is showed by Aftandil Erkinov, an ulama from Khiva wrote a *munâjât* in 1873-1878 to call for the help of God or saints against the Russian occupation of the oasis of Khiva and of the whole of Kharazm[8]. The saints invoked in these texts are prophets and local figures of Kharazm (Sufi saints and kings). Erkinov mentions another *munâjât* which is dedicated to the Russo-Japanese war. Here the *munâjât* are far from mystical texts. Similarly, we know of a *munâjât* attributed to ʻAbd al-ʻAziz Makhdûm (d. 1981), an East Turkistani who died in prison because he fought the Chinese forty years before[9]. It is surprising that ʻAbd al-ʻAziz Makhdûm's *munâjât* was reprinted in 1993 at the end of a Wahhabî book written in Arabic by an Uyghur ulama, Muhammad Sultân al-Maʻsûmî al-Khujandî al-Makkî (d. 1964-1962), and translated into Uyghur. This *munâjât* refers to liberty of the homeland (*vätän-mellät*), to slavery and to the honour of Islam. It also praises the Golden Horde and some great ancestors of the Turks and advocates the revival of Islam in Xinjiang. Conversely, we also have *munâjât* written by reformist poets like the Uzbek Tavalla (d. 1939) who call on the help of God for the awakening of the Muslims of Central Asia and

4) Serge de Laugier de Beaurecueil, *Ansârî: cris du cœur* (Paris: Sindbad, 1988).

5) Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden. Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asia Sufi Center* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 10; C.E. Bosworth, "Munâdjât," *EI 2*, VII, 1993, p. 558.

6) Gabrielle Rachel van den Berg, *The Pamir Mountains : a Study on the Songs and Poems of the Ismâîlîs of Tajik Badakhshan* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag , 2004), p. 287.

7) *Ibid*, p. 288.

8) *Praying for and Against the Tsar. Prayers and Sermons in Russian-Dominated Khiva and Tsarist Turkestan* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, ANOR, 2004).

9) Muhammad Sultân al-Maʻsûmî al-Khujandî al-Makkî, *Kitâb al-Tavhîd* (Mecca: n.p., 1993), pp. 157-158. ʻAbd al-ʻAziz Makhdûm was the son of ʻAbd al-Qâdir Dâmullâm, a well known reformist ulama of Xinjiang.

for the development of education and the sciences[10]. Finally the *munâjât* are not linked exclusively to Sunni Islam since we also find this genre among the Ismailis of the Pamirs. Particularly striking is an Ismaili *munâjât* the content of which resembles the *devriyye* genre in Ottoman Turkey that describes the "circle of existence of man in cosmological terms." Here the author of the *munâjât* "asks God, who initiated his existence, to complete the process by guiding him along the path (...) in order to become absorbed in the Universal Beloved[11]".

The *munâjât* of the Sufis: from petitionary prayer to the reading of a *silsila*

Now let us turn to the Sufi *munâjât*. The model of the short *munâjât* inaugurated by Ansârî has several imitators in Central Asia, in both Persian and Turkish languages starting earlier for 'Alî Shîr Navâ'î, the first representative of Chaghatay literature, who authorised such poetry[12]. Ley mentions that *munâjât* rarely exist in the form of independent booklets, but are usually included in divans. The *munâjât* are usually included in poetry collections. There are some *munâjât* for example in the *Thubât al-'ajizîn* by the well-known Sûfî Allah-Yâr (18th c.), a member of the Naqshbandiyya[13]. His book was reprinted several times in 19th and 20th centuries and Sûfî Allah-Yâr's poetry was very popular and was chanted in both Sufi and profane meetings. However, the most famous *munâjât* is attributed to 'Abd al-Qâdir al-Jîlânî (d. 1165), the founder of the Qâdiriyya order. This Sufi is better known under the name of Ghawth al-A'zam (the Great Helper), and this is probably the reason why his *munâjât* is so famous. In the beginning of the 20th century, the Russian ethnologist A. L. Troitskaja attended a dhikr meeting of Qâdirî women in Tashkent where this *munâjât* was chanted, and later published the text of this poem[14]. This text must be one of the rare *munâjât* which exists in the form of an independant booklet; we do know for example a manuscript entitled "*Munâjât*-i Hadrat-i Ghawth al-A'zam" preserved in the private library of Dûkchî Ishân (end of 19th c.), a notorious Naqshbandî shaykh who fought the Russians[15]. Finally, according to the ethno-musicologist Razija Sultanova, this *munâjât* is still chanted in contemporary Central Asia among the Uzbeks of the Ferghana Valley[16].

It is also of interest to note that *munâjât* are present in hagiographical literature, for example in the "Tadhkira-i 'Arsh al-Dîn," a saint of Eastern Turkestan (14th century) to whom was attributed

10) Tavalla, *Ravnak ul-Islam* (Tashkent: Fan Nashriyati, 1993), p. 27.

11) van den Berg, *The Pamir Mountains*, pp. 291-293. On the *devriye* genre see Abdullah Uçman, "The Theory of the Dawr and the Dawrîyas in Ottoman Sufi Literature," in Ahmed Yaşar Ocak, ed., *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005, pp. 445-475.

12) See Erkinov, *Praying for and Against the Tsar*, p. 7.

13) *Thubât al-'ajizîn-i janâb-i Sûfî Allah-Yâr* (Bukhara: Mullâ Muhammadî Makhdûm Matbû', 1911; reed. *Sabotul Ojizin*, Tashkent: Mehnat, 1991), Arabic text, pp. 22-24, 27, 31-32, 107-108

14) A. L. Troitskaja, "Jenskij zikr v starom Tashkente," *Sbornik Muzeja Antropologii i Ètnografii* (Léningrad, AN SSSR) VII (1929): pp. 179-182. About 'Abd al-Qâdir al-Jîlânî and his order in Central Asia, see Th. Zarcone, "La Qâdiriyya en Asie centrale et au Turkestan oriental," *Journal of the History of Sufism* 1-2 (2000): pp. 296-297.

15) See Sh.J. Zijadov and A. Muminov, "Biblioteka Dûkchî Îshâna," in B.M. Babazhanov and A. von Kükelgen, *Manâkib-i Qûkchî Îshân* (Tashkent-Bern-Almaty: Institut Vostokovedenija Biruni, 2004), p. 362

16) Razija Sultanova, *Pojushchee Slovo Uzbekskikh Obrjadov* (Tachkent: n.p., 1994), pp. 68-69.

the conversion of the Mongol sovereign Tûghlûq Timûr[17]. In another hagiography (Tadhkira-yi Hadrat-i Khwâja Muhammad Sharîf Buzurgvâr") by the poet and Qalandar Muhammad Dhalilî (d. beginning of 17th c.), which is dedicated to the Sufi saint Muhammad Sharîf, there are some *munâjât* which are supposed to be read by pilgrims at the mausoleum of Muhammad Sharîf at Yarkand. The *munâjât* is entitled "*Munâjât* ba dargâh-i Qâzî al-Hâjjât" (*munâjât* to him who will provide for our need[18]) The shaykhs in charge of a tomb must have been naturally inclined to use *munâjât* since this literary genre suited their requirements.

Munâjât exist also in confidential Naqshbandî literature which is less widespread and reserved to the members of the brotherhood exclusively. Let us mention as an example several uncommon *munâjât* in a manual of a branch of an East Turkistani lineage (Thâqibî) of the Naqshbandî-Mujaddidî which are devoted to the prophets related to the subtle centres of the body (*latâ'îf*) that constitute the inner body of the Sufi[19]. Among a series of six *munâjât*, for example, one is entitled "*munâjât* of the centre of the heart" (*latîfa-yi qalb munâjâtî*) and dedicated to the prophet Adam; another one, the *munâjât* (of the centre of the soul), is addressed to the prophets Noah (Nûh) and Abraham (Ibrâhim). Moreover, there are also in this manual *munâjât* read during "meditation" exercises (*muraqaba*). Here these short *munâjât* are written in Arabic or in Persian and they are frequently, although not systematically, translated into Turkish (*turkî*).

All the *munâjât* presented above are petitionary prayers to God, to a prophet or to a saint, but rarely to more than one or two persons. In addition, there are *munâjât* which are addressed to a group of saints, sometimes in significant numbers. In these cases, the *munâjât* takes the shape of an enumeration of the Sufi masters to whom the poet traces his spiritual lineage. Consequently, the *munâjât* resembles the *silsila-nâma* of the Sufi orders or rather to the *khatm-i khwâjagân* of the Naqshbandî lineage which is a *silsila-nâma* ritually chanted before the dhikr ceremony. Actually, I would venture that there is a natural tendency for the *silsila-nâma* to be used as a *munâjât*. Therefore it is not surprising to find such a *munâjât* written by one of the major Naqshbandî shaykhs and poets of 19th century, 'Abd al-Azîz Majdhûb Namangânî (Ferghana Valley[20]). The list of the saints invoked in this *munâjât* starts with the Prophet Muhammad, the caliphs, the imams and some other illustrious figures of Sufism (Bâyazid Bistâmî, Kharaqânî), then it continues with the founder of the lineage, Bahâ' al-Dîn Naqshband, and the other representatives of his spiritual lineage, including Ahmad Sirhindî and Khalîfa Husayn. Let us quote another example. There is a booklet of the contemporary Naqshbandiyya-Thâqibiyya of Xinjiang (mentioned above) entitled

17) Edited by Masami Hamada, *Hagiographies du Turkestan Oriental. Textes čaġatay édités, traduits en japonais et annotés avec une introduction analytique et historique* (Kyoto: Graduated Schools of Letters - Kyoto University, 2007), pp. 10-11. See also Hamada, "Islamic Saints and their Mausoleums," *Acta Asiatica* 34 (1978): pp. 81-83.

18) Edited by Emin Tursun in *Zälili Divânî* (Beijing: Millätlär Näshriyati, 1985), pp. 506-510. *Qâzî al-Hâjjât* is an epithet for God.

19) From a manual used in the Naqshbandî-Thâqibî lineage of Xinjiang; Diyâ' al-Dîn Yarkandî Ayyûb Qarî, *Manba' al-asrâr* (Yarkand: n.p., circa 1937-1941), pp. 28-35. See also *Husn al-Anzâr fî Manba' al-asrâr* ([Urumchi]: n.p., n.d.), pp. 54 sq.

20) Ikromiddin Ostonqulov, "Traditions orales et Littérature chez les Qâdirî de la vallée du Ferghana aux XIXe-XXe siècles," *Journal of the History of Sufism* (Istanbul) 1-2 (2000): pp. 518-520.

Munâjât vä du'âlâr which comprehends several prayers and technical explanations about dhikr, and also the whole *silsila* of the lineage[21]. The title of this booklet suggests that the *silsila* might be read at dhikr meetings to calling for the help of the spiritual ancestors of the lineage.

There are also *munâjât* addressed to a great number of saints belonging to various *silsila*, without any order. One of them, presented as a *munâjât* of Ahmad Yasawî ("*Munâjât*-i Hadrat-i Sultân al-'ârifîn Sultân Khwâja Ahmad Yasawî"), was published and translated in French by Erkinov[22]. However, this *munâjât* is far from a *silsila* of the Yasawî lineage. More than 60 prophets, sufi shaykhs and kings are quoted in this text and Ahmad Yasawî himself is considered the most famous among them. It is of interest to note that, in this *munâjât*, holy places, i.e. tombs and mausoleums of saints (*mazar*, *qadam-gâh*), are listed beside the prophets and saints. Finally, I would like to mention a little document entitled *Khatma Tariqisi. 37 ävliya – mashaikhlärining oqughan* which I bought in the bazaar of Khotan (Xinjiang) ten years ago. This booklet of 12 pages contains a list of the 37 prophets, imams and sufi shaykhs who were, in the eyes of the Uyghur writer, the most popular in the year 1990. Concerning four of these saints (Khwâjagân [!]; Sulaymân-i Farsî; Hâmid Khân; Miyân Quddus Khân), the author mentions a particular *munâjât* one must read when one wants to pray to them[23].

The *munâjât* of the Shamans: calling on the saints and spirits

We are told by O. Murodov, a Soviet ethnologist who has surveyed shamanism and pre-Islamic practices in Central Asia, that Tajik Shamans have adopted the term *munâjât* (Russian, *prizyvanie*) for their prayers calling for the intercession of protectors, spirits and saints (*ins û jinn* - men and jinn) when healing the sick[24]. Murodov writes that the *munâjât* genre is not consistent among the shamans as it reflects their particular practices and beliefs[25]. Murodov mentions also that the helper forms to whom the shamanistic *munâjât* is addressed can be classified under four categories: prophets, sufi saints, spirits, and holy places (*mazar*[26]). The *munâjât* genre must have been passed, in my opinion, from Sufism to Shamanism through popular Sufism since this genre was widespread amongst the people and especially chanted in both Sufi and profane meetings.

Among the shamanistic *munâjât* collected by Murodov, one resembles the second category of Sufi *munâjât* analysed above, and particularly that which addresses a long list of saints[27]. From

21) [Diyâ' al-Dîn Yarkandî Ayyûb Qarî et als], *Mûnâjât vä dû'âlâr* ([Urumchi]: n.p., [circa 2002]).

22) Aftandil Erkinov, "Une Prière (*munâjât*) attribuée à Ahmad Yasawî," *Journal of the History of Sufism* 4 (2005): pp. 279-292.

23) Khotan: n.p., [circa 1990]. See my presentation of this booklet in Zarcone, "Le Culte des saints au Xinjiang de 1949 à nos jours," *Journal of the History of Sufism* 3 (2002): pp. 139-140.

24) O. Murodov, "Shamanskij obrjadovyj folklor y Tadzhikob srednej chasti doliny Zerashana," in *Domusulmanskie verovanija i obrjady ve Srednej Azii* (Moskva: Akademija Nauk SSSR, 1975), pp. 98-108. O. A. Sukhareva notices that the term *munâjat* is used in Samarkand, but in Uratjube the shamans (bakhshi) use the local term *gyoish* (?); O.A. Sukhareva, "Perezhitki demonologii i shamanstva y ravninnykh Tadzhikov," in *Domusulmanskie verovanija i obrjady ve Srednej Azii*, p. 69.

25) Murodov, "Shamanskij obrjadovyj folklor," p. 96.

26) Ibid., p. 96.

27) Ibid., pp. 100-107.

this point of view both shamanistic and Sufi *munâjât* are very similar. Nevertheless these *munâjât* have different purposes since the Sufi asks God or saints for spiritual guidance while the shaman strive to heal the sick. A second major difference between shamanistic and Sufi *munâjât* comes from the content of the list of deities addressed by the *munâjât*. Actually, although almost all the prophets and prominent sufi saints invocated in the sufic *munâjât* are adopted by the shamanistic *munâjât*, there is in this second *munâjât* a class of deities which never appear in the first one, a class of spirits, i.e. jinns and various demons. These spirits are classified under various categories: *pari, momo, albasti, lashkar, shaytân, chiltan*[28]. In the shamanistic *munâjât* mentioned above, there are 123 names of figures invoked: 8 are prophets, imams, theologians and figures from the Bible and the Quran; 74 are saints and sufis (*walî, awliyâ, khwâja*); 21 are *momo*; 13 are *pari*, 2 are *albasti* and there are 4 other demons and one *chiltan*. The most venerated figures in this *munâjât* are Ghavth al-A'zam (mentioned also under his real name of 'Abd al-Qâdir al-Jîlânî) and the chiltan spirits (see below). But we find also the names of well known representatives of Central Asian Sufism like Ahmad Yasawî, Bâyazid Bistâmî, Bahâ' al-Dîn Naqshband, and Imâm-i Rabbanî (Ahmad Sirhindî). There are other shamanistic petitionary prayers (described or not as *munâjât*) which address different series of spirits and saints[29]. In the Kazakhistan steppes, the shamans invoke in general local Sufi saints among whom many are more or less linked with the Yasawî lineage, various spirits and the chiltan[30].

To sum up, we will refer to the major figures of Central Asian Islam to whom these *munâjât* are addressed. The most prominent figure, I believe, is 'Abd al-Qâdir al-Jîlânî (Ghawth al-A'zam), due to his great popularity in Central Asia and perhaps because the "*Munâjât*-i Hadrat-i Ghawth al-A'zam" might be the model *par excellenc*e for all the *munâjât*[31]. The other major Sufis are Ahmad Yasawî and Shâh-i Zinda. Among the prophets, the name of Solomon is quoted several times, particularly by the shamans, because, I believe, he is reputed to have forced the jinns and demons to obey him[32]. Among the spirits, the most popular deity for the shamans is without doubt the Chiltan[33]. These spirits are forty all-powerful Muslim saints who are certainly of pre-Islamic origin coming from the Iranian mythology[34]. They appear not only in the prayers chanted by

28) For more information on these creatures, see Joseph Castagné, "Etudes sur la démonologie des Kazak-Kirghizs," *L'Ethnographie* 21-22 (1930): pp. 1-22; Sukhareva, "Perezhitki demonologii i shamanstva y ravninnykh Tadzhikov," and Garrone, *Chamanisme et Islam en Asie centrale*, pp. 156-174.

29) Murodov, "Shamanskij obrjadovyj folklor," pp. 113-115.

30) According to several prayers published by A. A. Divaev, "Baksy, kak lekar' i koldun," *Iz oblasti kirgizskih verovanij* (Kazan: 1899), pp. 3-7, 25-27, 29-34.

31) A. L. Troitskaja, "Lechenie bol'nyh izgnaniem zlyh duhov (kuchuruk) sredi osedlogo naselenija Turkestana ," *Bjulleten' Sredne-Aziatskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta* (Tashkent) 10 (1925): p. 154.

32) On his cult see Zarcone, "Atypical Mausoleum: the Case of the Throne of Solomon (Kirghizistan): *Qadamjâ*, Jinns-Cult and Itinerary-Pilgrimage," in Yasushi Shinmen; Minoru Sawada; and Edmund Waite, *Muslim Saints in Central Asia and in Xinjiang*, Proceeding of the Conference of Tokyo, November 2005 (Paris: Jean Maisonneuve, in print).

33) A.A. Divaev', *Iz Oblasti Kirgizskikh' Verovanij. Baksy, Kak' Lekar' i Koldun'* (Kazan: 1899), p. 5 ; Murodov, "Shamanskij obrjadovyj folklor," p. 115.

34) See M.S. Andreev, "Chil'tany v Sredne-aziatskih verovanijah," *Iz rabot Vostochnogo Fakul'teta Sredne-Aziatskogo Gos. Universiteta*, Izdanie Obshchestva dlja izuchenija Tadzhikistana i iranskih narodnostej za ego predelami (Tashkent: 1927), pp. 334-348; V.N. Basilov, "The Chiltan Spirits," in Mihaly Hoppal, ed., *Shamanism in Eurasia* (Göttingen: ED. Herodot, 1984), pp. 253-267; Garrone, *Chamanisme et Islam en Asie centrale*, pp. 163-165.

the shamans, but also in Central Asian epics (Alpamish, Manas[35]) and in Persian Sufi poetry[36]. Actually, the chiltan are considered as Sufi saints in Persian Sufism while they are spirits (classified sometimes under the class of pari) in shamanism. In one of the numerous versions of the epic of Alpamish there is a petitionary prayer which resembles a Sufi *munâjât* (rather than a shamanistic one) because the deities invoked by the hero Alpamish are not spirits, but prophets, imams (‘Alî, Dânyâr / Daniel) and Sufi saints (Yûsuf Hamadânî, Shâh-i Zinda, Amîr Kulâl, Khwâja Ahrâr, Sufi Allahyar, etc.[37]). Nevertheless the chiltan play a predominant role in Alpamish prayer as they are invoked several times and, according to the epic, they finally helped him to escape from his prison. Moreover, there is a mausoleum in the Yarkand oasis called “Chiltanlar[38]” and we do know a hagiography (“Chiltän Täzkirisi”) by Muhammad Dhalilî which is dedicated to the chiltan attached to this shrine[39]. The reason for the presence of this class of spirits in both shamanistic and Sufi *munâjât* and prayers must come from their ambiguous character for they belong both to the spirit and Sufi pantheon.

In conclusion, we must keep in mind that the *munâjât* genre is like a pointer to the saintly figures who have left a strong imprint in the memory of the Muslim population of Central Asia (particularly in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and southern Kazakhstan), in both elite and popular Islam. These figures are actually the persons considered by the Central Asians the most worthy to be called on for help on any occasion. Until the present day, although the shamans have been fiercely criticized by extremist religious groups, the great majority of the population has gone to them. Similarly, they also used to visit the ishan (the name in Central Asia for the Sufi shaykh). All this means that thanks to the shaman or the ishan, the prayers of the great majority of the Central Asia population will be addressed similarly to saints and spirits. The fate of the *munâjât* in Central Asia is also another confirmation of the borrowing of Sufi elements by the shamans. Although we do know that it was in general mostly practices like dhikr and dances which were borrowed by shamans[40], here we have a literary element. Finally, we may notice that not only Sufi saints considered popular due to their teaching being open to less orthodox Islamic tradition (as the Yasawî sufis are) were welcomed by the shamans, as is commonly accepted, but also that major figures of very orthodox sufism, namely the Naqshbandiyya, were also invoked by the shamans in *munâjât* chanted at healing rituals (for ex. Bahâ’ al-Dîn Naqshband, Makhdûm-i A‘zam, Ahmad Sirhindî). This study of the *munâjât* genre in Central Asia is a first step; further research has to be

35) A.T. Hatto, “The Kirghiz and Surrounding Peoples in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Kirghiz Epic,” in R. Dor, ed., *L’Asie centrale et ses voisins. Influences réciproques* (Paris: INALCO, 1990), p. 79.

36) See for example in the case of the Ahl-i Haqq of Kurdistan: Jean During, *Musique et Mystique dans les traditions de l’Iran* (Leuven: IFRI-Peters, 1989), pp. 350-352.

37) *Alpomish*, edited by Hodi Zarif and Tura Mirzaev (Tashkent: Uzbek Khalq Dostonlari, 1993), pp. 103-105. This version transmitted and preserved by the shaman (bakhshi) Fâdil Yuldâsh Ughlî (1873-1953) was edited in the beginning of the 20th century by the Uzbek literari Hamîd ‘Alîmjân

38) Rahilä Davut, *Uyghur Mazarliri* (Urumchi: Shinjang Khalq Nashriyati), pp. 83-88.

39) Edited by Emin Tursun in *Zälili Divânî*, pp. 456-477.

40) See Zarcone, “Interpénétration du soufisme et du chamanisme dans l’aire turque”; Vuillemenot, “Danses rituelles kazakhes entre soufisme et chamanisme,” in D. Aigle et als, eds., *La Politique des esprits*, pp. 345-360; id., “Quand un bakhshi kazakh évoque Allah,” *Journal of the History of Sufism* 4 (2004): pp. 131-131.

done on other shamanistic *munâjât* in order to confirm or criticize our hypothesis and collecting new *munâjât* in field work will be an absolute necessity before this tradition fades away.

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